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SUBJECT: NEW MOZAMBICAN FOREIGN MINISTER DISCUSSES ZIMBABWE

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Matthew P. Roth, Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) In an initial call on new Foreign Minister Oldemiro Baloi April 15 (other issues reviewed septel), the Charge stated that the USG viewed the situation in Zimbabwe as increasingly dire, that it was imperative to get democratic resolution soonest, and pressed for the GRM to take on a more active role. The Foreign Minister replied that the GRM was worried as well, and that Mozambique was a 'stakeholder' in Zimbabwe's future. He said that dialogue is fundamental--the GRM cannot cut off communication with Zimbabwe. He noted that the SADC summit the past weekend in Lusaka, which Baloi attended, showed that SADC had been successful in Zimbabwe on two levels. First, SADC had created an environment in which elections could actually take place and voters make an honest choice. Second, the summit was an opportunity for heads of state to hear first-hand from Zimbabwe's opposition candidates. Mugabe's no-show at the summit was actually helpful, he said, since it allowed all participants to be more open and honest than they might have otherwise been--there was actual debate on the way forward. In any case, Baloi said that the ultimate decision needed to be made by the Zimbabwean people.

¶2. (C) The Charge responded that the USG believed that the Zimbabweans had indeed already taken that ultimate decision--so many people voting against Mugabe in the election was a brave step to take--and now they were not getting the promised results. Instead, the government appeared to be cracking down on those areas that had voted against Mugabe. Baloi expressed surprise about such reprisals in regions that supported the MDC and requested more information. The Charge told him that we would send him a summary separately that listed specific examples so the Foreign Minister could see for himself. Hinting at impatience, Baloi did note that the ZEC had repeatedly stated that election results could not be released pending a pronouncement from the High Court. With this issue resolved, Baloi said, there was no longer any reason for further delay.

¶3. (C) Comment: Foreign Minister Baloi, a refreshingly interactive new member in the Mozambican Government, cautioned us that there were limits to how far the GRM could go publicly--repeating the oft-heard 'respect for sovereignty' line and noting that Mozambique had suffered in its own history from external attempts at destabilization and desired to avoid the same accusation. Nonetheless, Vice Foreign Minister Eduardo Koloma was quoted by the press on April 11 as saying that the GRM is very anxious to hear the results of the Zimbabwe elections and to see both sides accept the result. Koloma even pointed to the crisis as having a negative effect on Mozambique's economy. Such a public statement by a GRM official, the first of any substance, is encouraging. We believe that President Guebuza and Foreign Minister Baloi may have chosen the Vice Foreign

Minister (up until now viewed as a very weak and inconsequential figure) to make this statement to gauge public (and SADC's) reaction before attempting to make any additional public statements at a higher level.

¶4. (C) We believe that this would be an opportune time for a high-level phone call from Washington to Foreign Minister Baloi or President Guebuza to further encourage the GRM to take a more activist role in seeking a solution in Zimbabwe. Mozambique has much to lose from further instability in Zimbabwe that could lead to increased refugee flows. Post would recommend Baloi over the President only because such a call could further strengthen the new Foreign Minister's hand as he appears more willing to have a substantive exchange on the issue---and it was his Vice-Minister who spoke out publicly last week. End Comment.

Chapman